

April X, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

Thank you for your work to combat the COVID-19 pandemic during these uncertain times. Your efforts to help provide Americans with the necessary resources and aid is a difficult but important task. This pandemic has heightened the need to readjust our current thinking about preventing the spread of not only the current virus, but also other bacterial and viral pathogens that threaten our health, safety, and, frankly, our way of life.

As you oversee the disbursement of COVID-19 relief funds to hospitals and other healthcare providers, we urge you to support the use of antimicrobial surface materials in high-touch areas such as door hardware, bed rails, faucets, and work stations, if they so choose. Providing facilities and healthcare providers with incentive and guidance for deploying this additional line of defense that does not rely on human behavior will continuously decrease the amount of disease-causing bacteria and viruses that normally exist in healthcare settings, leading to a significant positive impact on public health.

Studies have shown that minerals, such as copper<sup>1</sup>, silver<sup>2</sup>, zinc<sup>3</sup> and others have antimicrobial properties that can lead to reductions in the spread of infection causing viruses and bacteria. For example, the use of silver-coated breathing tubes<sup>4</sup> has shown to reduce the incidences of ventilator-associated pneumonia, microbiologic burden, and device-related adverse events among adult patients. For copper, a randomized control trial<sup>5</sup> from July 12, 2010 to June 14, 2011 funded by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), six common highly touched objects in intensive care unit rooms were replaced with items made from antimicrobial copper alloys. This resulted in the reduced risk of hospital-acquired infections (HAI) by more than 50 percent at all study sites. Further, a study<sup>6</sup> recently conducted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the SARS-CoV-2 virus (which causes the disease COVID-19), remained viable for up to 72 and 48 hours respectively, on plastic and stainless steel surfaces, but less than four hours on copper surfaces.

As healthcare providers move forward and work to ensure patient outcomes in their facilities, as well as prepare for future pandemics, we urge you to ensure COVID-19 relief funds remain eligible for the purchase and installation of antimicrobial surface products in their facilities. It is important that facilities and providers have the resources and flexibility to support a systems-based approach to mitigate the spread of infection causing bacteria and viruses.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4561453/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2364932/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6128804/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23528117>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23571364>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>

Thank you for your consideration of this important request during these difficult times. Such actions will provide facilities and providers with additional options in their fight to improve public health.

Sincerely,

DRAFT